

REGIS COLLEGE

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December 28, 1973.

Rev. Patrick G. Malone, S.J.,
President,
Loyola of Montreal,
7141 Sherbrooke St. West,
Montreal 262, P.Q.

Dear Father Malone:

We present herewith the Report on Theology at Loyola that you requested of us.

We became aware during our stay at Loyola that we would not in our report be able to satisfy fully the wishes of the Dean of Arts. Perhaps we have not satisfied yours either. But whatever contribution the Report may make it is offered with the sincere wish of assisting you in your difficult task and of furthering the work that Loyola is doing.

Our best wishes to you personally. We were sorry to have missed you during our short visit.

Sincerely,

F.E.Crowe
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Fred E. Crowe

C.E.Curran
.....
Charles E. Curran

Jean-Louis D'Aragon
.....
Jean-Louis D'Aragon

REPORT
OF
THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGY AT LOYOLA

In accepting a request to serve on a presidential committee for studying theology at Loyola, evaluating the present Department of Theological Studies, and recommending a profile of specialization for that department, we are conscious of the honor done us and of the trust that is placed in our judgment. But still more deeply do we feel the responsibility that is laid on us by this charge, a responsibility that regards not only the future work of Loyola and the honorable reputation it has acquired in a long history, but also the careers and livelihood of individual members of the Loyola academic community. In these circumstances it is imperative that we acknowledge clearly the limits of our own competence, and (perhaps it should be stated frankly) express some dissatisfaction we felt in regard to the organization of the inquiry.

The limits of our competence are simple to list. Two members of the committee have very little direct knowledge and no experience in the field of undergraduate theology in the universities. Further, it turned out that the only time we could come together for our study was one of considerable pressure for all of us, so that we were able to give only three days to work on the scene, with one of our members unavoidably absent even for part of that time; it was a time too of some difficulty for Loyola personnel, with examinations upon them and the end of the semester

approaching. As a result we were not able to arrange all the interviews we had hoped to have, or to reflect at leisure on the results obtained, or to put the further questions that such reflection might have suggested. The role of the Department of Theological Studies in the purpose of Loyola as a whole is an area we would have liked to investigate more fully, and the great complexities of Loyola's situation in the wider community of Montreal and the Province of Quebec remained quite beyond our mastery. Finally, we feel obliged to say that some of our requests for prior statements from Loyola were not met, and to suggest that better judgment might have been exercised in the selection of the committee.

In this situation - and may we be somewhat emphatic about this - we are especially concerned that our presentation not be given undue weight, as if it were the consciously pondered and deliberate judgment of men who had made a thorough study. Except for some statements on the disunity of the present department, it is a report of impressions formed and of tentative judgments reached with a view to guiding further inquiry rather than to putting a decisive end to the investigation.

And, nevertheless, with these reservations about the results of our study, we wish to record the pleasure it was for us to come to Loyola, to meet so much dedication combined with intelligence, scholarship, and wisdom, and to take some small part in the great work Loyola has done and is doing. Indeed, a personal result of the task we undertook was a desire on the part of all three of us to further that work in any way we could, and we are only sorry that our report cannot

be the contribution that Loyola had asked and we ourselves would wish to make.

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The committee met first in the evening on Sunday, December 16; we were briefed on our task by the Dean of Arts, Rev. R. Breen, and given an opportunity to put questions relating to the scope and conduct of our investigation. The head of the Department of Theological Studies, Dr. Josef Hofbeck, was on hand for the first part of the meeting to provide us with documentation on the department, its faculty and student body, and on the counterparts of the department at McGill and Sir George Williams Universitites.

Mornings and afternoons on Monday and Tuesday, December 17 and 18, were devoted to interviews, mostly with the chairman and faculty of the department. We were able to meet all the professors except Dr. Spicer and Dr. Wesolowsky. On Tuesday afternoon we interviewed the Chief Librarian and his Assistant. On Tuesday evening the committee held its own meeting to formulate impressions received so far, and to plan work for the periods of Wednesday that had been left open. On Wednesday morning interviews continued, first with five students who were majoring in theology at Loyola, and then with the Director of the Evening Division. We also had another meeting with Dr. Breen and one with Dr. Hofbeck, and we received further documentation from some of the faculty members. Finally on Wednesday afternoon the committee met to revise the report sketched the previous evening, and to decide what recommendations it might conscientiously make. There

was by this time a clear recognition that we could not meet fully the request Loyola had made of us. We considered the question of a return to the campus at a later date. But the difficulties were too great, and in any case (a factor decisive in itself) it did not seem to us that we should ourselves undertake the further investigation to which our conclusions were pointing. The committee then disbanded, leaving the draft of its report with Fr. Crowe for minor revisions and typing; this final form of the report was then circulated by mail for the approval and signatures of the committee members.

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In a self-study undertaken not long ago the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola expressed its character as follows: ". . . an academic institute for Catholic Studies especially designed for the needs of the English-speaking population of Montreal, the Province of Quebec and beyond, with an essential openness to other denominations, religions and disciplines . . ." We note with approval that this is a position taken in conscious contrast to a merely phenomenological approach to religion, and that it is not just broadly Christian, but truly Catholic, showing a sense of responsibility to the wider community that Loyola serves, though it in no way excludes Protestants from the faculty. (1)

The program has been set up with courses in three divisions: (1) courses of general interest which lead from contemporary problems to theology - the 300 courses; (2) courses introductory to the department specialties - the 400 courses (2)

which lead from the tradition to theology; and (3) advanced courses introducing students into sub-areas of theological studies - the 500 courses. The 400 courses are more directly concerned with Catholic tradition, and the 300 courses aim rather at the religious experience of the student body in general. We like this division. It does seem, however, that there are very few courses on the 300 level which would allow the Catholic student to relate directly to his own religious experience as it occurs within his tradition; in our view this too should be an option. There is perhaps relatively too strong an emphasis on scripture and a corresponding lack in the systematic areas. While we do not advocate "coverage" in the systematic area, there are large lacunae; for example, there is a course on atheism but none on God, and Christology is treated only from a scriptural basis; further, no one seems designated to teach ecclesiology or sacramentology.

It is praiseworthy that such a large number of the department members have their Ph.D., though in saying this we do not mean to imply that Prof. Webster should not receive tenure. Praiseworthy too are the efforts of chairman and faculty to take advantage of the new situation and promote a specialization that was not possible earlier when theology was obligatory for Loyola students. The way students have been trained to use the library facilities is also to the credit of the faculty. As for the chairman himself, his dedication is obvious, his scholarship well attested, and his industry beyond reproach. He seems to have good ideas on theology in general, and has done valuable work in the

organization of the curriculum. His positive qualities for leadership are impressive, and it would be a great pity if, when the future of the department depends so much on that leadership, his work were not to have its full effect because of insufficient attention, on one side or the other, to the diplomacy required in the functioning of a department.

If we look at the faculty now under the heading of its numerical strength, we cannot deny the figures of the faculty-student ratio, but we would urge, before judgment is formed on the proper number of professors, that many other relevant factors be taken into account: the approaching retirement of some members, the recent involvement of others in administration, the difficult period of transition and adjustment the department is going through, and the evidence of growing interest among students for Honours or Major programs in theological studies. Presently we will mention also the possibility of a graduate program in this department. Further, we have reservations about the 15 to 1 ratio set by Loyola. We are told that generally in the Province of Quebec the ratio is 13 to 1, and further that the faculty of the University of Montreal carries a six-hour teaching load instead of nine. Finally, if strict mathematics were to be applied at the moment, the department might be deprived of the minimum strength it needs to function as a department.

We turn now to another matter that is extremely serious and should give grave concern to Loyola; even our imperfect study revealed that the problem is real and deep-seated, and

could well be the primary problem of the department. We refer to the serious lack of communication among the members and their deep distrust of one another. They apparently do not talk frankly together on administrative questions; they do not share theological interests with one another; they do not collaborate in team-teaching. In short they do not seem to act like a community of scholars. Under these conditions it will be quite impossible to settle the problems of the department, and extremely difficult to improve the quality of the curriculum and teaching. As a partial remedy on the more academic side, we strongly recommend a regular faculty seminar in which department members might acquaint one another with their research and teaching interests; possibly a dinner or social function could be combined with this. Another possibility would be seminars for Honours or Major students, with two or more of the faculty cooperating in their direction. But beyond the academic there is a personal problem of morale. It very obviously stems mainly from the insecurity generated when five of the faculty members anxiously await word on tenure, knowing at the same time the possibility of faculty cut-backs. This has a harmful effect throughout the faculty, even on the tenured members, who equally become objects of distrust. The administration is seriously obliged to take steps to eliminate this uncertainty and insecurity, so that the department can begin to function normally.

Let us turn to the students. About one-third of them are preparing for teaching in secondary schools, and about one-third are thinking of post-graduate work in theology.

A minority, though taking their B. A. with Honours or Major in theology, have other career goals, with about 20% integrating a second Major corresponding to their chosen career. A small percentage are seminarians studying for the priesthood.

The students expressed satisfaction in general with the curriculum, which they thought had improved greatly in the last few years. However, further improvements are desired: there is need of more in-depth treatment on the 500 level; and there are too many "Mickey Mouse" courses on the 300 level, though the problem here may be rather a failure on the part of the professor to go from the problem beyond it to theology. No more and maybe less than one-half the faculty members are considered competent, and the faculty disunity is clearly perceived by the students. -- Such would be the judgments based on our student interview; but we remember that we saw only a small segment of the student body, and that the views they expressed may not correspond exactly to the officially published course evaluations.

A word on the group of seminarians studying theology at Loyola: The group is not so large as to change very much the faculty-student ratio, nor is it likely to be in the future, so it cannot be expected to contribute to a solution of the pressing financial problems. Still, as an area of academic involvement and service, it could be an important opening for Loyola, and it seems to have the support of the faculty members and to be welcomed by the other students.

But there is evidence of the present inadequacy of the program for the needs of the seminarian, even in the areas of classical theology (as distinct from pastoral training in liturgy, canon law, and the like).

The evening division merits special attention. There seems to be a very promising future for courses designed for part-time teachers, part-time catechists, students enrolled in the day-programs, and those involved in various ways in pastoral work and evangelization. However, it would clearly be wrong to regard the evening division merely as an outlet for surplus staff of the department; the special needs of students in the evening division have to be the primary consideration.

From the department, its program, its faculty and student body, we turn now to the large question of Loyola as a whole and the place of the Department of Theological Studies in the wider perspective. We confess our disappointment at not receiving more input from the sister departments and the other faculties of Loyola, and of having no impression of how the unitary mind and heart of Loyola express themselves, if they do so at all. We regard this as an important omission; at a time when even so impersonal a figure as industry is being forced by public opinion to assume and declare a responsibility in the area of community values, it would be a pity if a Catholic university were to prove disunited or inarticulate on such matters.

This is not the place to develop a philosophy of the

Catholic university. In any case we are sure that Loyola does not regard itself as simply a marketplace where courses are bought and sold, that in this time of widespread searching and often deep anguish in the human family and among students in particular, Loyola will assume its responsibility with respect to the values of the community and student population it serves. But we would ask to what extent the university as a whole and each of its component parts consciously and deliberately assumes a role in this wider and common responsibility, and to what extent they recognize the special place a program of theological research, reflection, and teaching should have in helping a Catholic university be true to itself. We would urge the President to search for means to awaken in the whole academic community a common sense of responsibility, to involve it in common acceptance of responsibility, and to engage it in open discussion of ways to carry out that responsibility.

In view of the need to integrate religious and human values with the many aspects of modern life which, though so good in themselves, can be dehumanizing when deprived of higher influences (we think, for example, of modern technology), it would surely be appropriate for Loyola to stress even more the interdisciplinary program it has so laudably begun. And, to return to the immediate terms of our mandate, we recommend a high degree of involvement of the theological department both in this program and in dialogue with other departments. Joint programs and wide cross-listing of courses could also be a

way of linking theology more closely with the rest of the university. This would be at one and the same time an expression of Loyola's concern for making values present at all levels, and a means of providing that "subsidy" for theological studies that might be required if the department is to be maintained and Loyola is to preserve its identity.

Under this heading of the department's relation to the wider Loyola community, a short but special word should be added on the library. In the past the theological collection was built up in a commendable way, and even now the collection of periodicals in theology is good. We recognize too the need in the recent past to build up other areas in the library collection to meet new needs in the Loyola program. But we are concerned that remedial measures not be turned into a system of priorities, that the drop for theology from 6% of the budget in 1965 to 2% at present not be made a permanent feature of library policy. We would consider the needs of the whole English-speaking Catholic community of Montreal to be a factor in such planning, as well as the needs of the student body.

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As we look to the future, then, we state our belief that the Catholic character of Loyola should be maintained and strengthened; otherwise Loyola loses the specific identity that has been and still is interwoven with its tradition. Because of that tradition and that identity we do not think that the department of theology should be treated strictly according to rules which might apply to more marketable programs

in a university. Further, the crisis in which theological and religious studies are involved at present should be a reason for allowing the department time to effect a resurgence. If university policy regularly recognizes the need, for the sake of its integral character, to support some areas of science, languages, etc., which are not self-supporting, much more should this apply to a department of theological studies at Loyola.

Such a policy will affect any judgment made on the profile and curriculum of the department. One way of drawing such a profile is according to the traditional divisions of theology; this is the one operative at present, and it seems to have the approval of most of the faculty. If this is followed, the traditional areas would have to be provided for: a professor of Old Testament, a professor of New Testament, a professor of moral theology, one for ecclesiology and sacramentology, one or perhaps two for the other treatises of systematic theology, and two for historical theology; but, of course, tradition does not stand still, and there may be need of further staff to handle such areas as Christianity and culture, relations with the orthodox churches, the field of religions, etc. However, we would draw the attention of the President and the department to contemporary discussion on the nature of Roman Catholic theology which suggest other ways of structuring the curriculum.

There is another heading that likewise regards the future. We believe that the administration should very seriously consider the feasibility of a graduate program in

theological studies. There may be danger in a general over-expansion, but there seems to be a real need of the English-speaking Catholic community in Montreal for graduate studies in theology. If Loyola does not provide this program, students will have to go to McGill, to Sir George Williams, or outside the city. In keeping with its tradition Loyola, if it goes graduate in any area, should do so in theology. This would have the effect of strengthening the department. It would provide the seminarians who come to Loyola with the possibility of gaining a further degree.

We should be realistic in this matter. Obviously, if Loyola enters this field, it should be only at the master's level initially. We must admit too that a fair number of the faculty members do not seem qualified to direct work on the graduate level. The allotment of library funds would have to be increased for a graduate program. Possibly some conflict would arise between a master's degree in theology and the needs of Catholic teachers for specialization in religious education. And finally a graduate program at Loyola should not be such as to conflict with programs in other institutions of Montreal but such as to complement them; ultimately all these programs might be integrated in a common collaborative effort.

The point made with respect to Catholic teachers has a wider application. The promise held out by continuing education as a potential field for the Loyola Department of Theological Studies should be seriously considered, but by the same token

the needs of the students in that field should be carefully analyzed to determine whether theology proper or training in religious education is the need.

We come in our final word to what has emerged as the real problem for the administration at Loyola, and the real cause of anxiety in the Department of Theological Studies: the question of the future of the faculty and its individual members. It is a complex and delicate question. We appreciate the fact that it was the intention of the administration to provide a fair and objective assessment of the situation from an external committee, but to spare that committee the painful task of designating certain faculty members for promotion, for tenure, or for non-renewal of contracts. However, we think that the terms of reference were not thought through with sufficient clarity. It seemed to us that in the logic of the situation created by our terms of reference there was a pressure, which grew steadily as our task came into focus, moving us toward such a definition of a program and such an evaluation of the present department as would be tantamount to naming certain professors for promotion or retention, and naming others for non-renewal should cut-backs prove necessary. We resist that pressure. The analysis of the theological situation at Loyola and in Montreal needs much more study than we were able to undertake; the evaluation of the contribution made by individual professors could not be made by us without danger of serious injustice.

In these circumstances we see no alternative to the kind of report we are presenting. It offers advice with only

a tentative commitment of our judgment, and only at some remove from decisions on personnel. We have suggested a structure for a department, not in sharp relief but only in very general outline, one to be implemented not rigidly but flexibly. We have indicated a need to shift emphasis in some degree from the 300 courses to the 400 and 500 courses, and a need to strengthen systematic theology as well as to provide for ecclesiology and sacramentology. We have suggested that the 15 to 1 faculty-student ratio need not be strictly enforced, especially for theology. We have recommended inquiry into the feasibility of a graduate program, though inquiry must at the same time be made into qualifications of the faculty for working on the graduate level.

With these suggestions we must leave the matter in the hands of the Loyola community, adding only, if we may, some procedural proposals. That is, recognizing that some non-tenured members of the faculty might contribute more to the department than some tenured members, but recognizing also that established academic procedures give greater weight to the tenured members in the decision-making process, we would recommend that to the normal procedures for determining rank, promotion, and tenure, the following be added: Let (1) the tenure committee of the department, (2) the chairman of the department, and (3) the dean of the faculty, all submit to the President a list of non-tenured members of the department ranking them in terms of their ability to contribute to theological studies at Loyola. Years of service to Loyola

need not be a criterion in determining rank in such a list, but rather theological scholarship and teaching ability taken in conjunction with the department's needs. In determining those needs the profile we have drawn may be used, or the evaluator may exercise the right which is surely his of drawing another profile and making his suggestions accordingly. There is hardly a need for us to make the point that anyone in the department may write his own comments to the President.

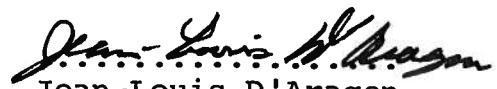
Armed with these results and those obtained through the regular procedural channels, the President and his assistants in administration must make the necessary decisions on the personnel of the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola. May these decisions be taken soon, and may the theological community at Loyola, its uncertainties and anxieties largely removed, begin to work as a truly academic community to further the work of Loyola and to make that contribution to the continuing tradition and identity of Loyola that a department of theology should bring to a Catholic university.

December 27, 1973

Respectfully submitted,


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Fred E. Crowe

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Charles E. Curran


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Jean-Louis D'Aragon